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INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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Yelgava Prison

General

1. The prison at Yelgava was in existence before World War II. No war damage or new buildings were observed. The cells were fairly large and contained 16 to 17 prisoners, men and women quartered separately. The windows had bars and were covered by some screening which admitted very little light. Electric lights were turned on by dusk and burned all night. There were small openings in the cell doors so that the guards could observe the prisoners. Guards were continually patrolling the corridors. The buildings and the walls around the courtyard were of brick. A bathhouse was located in the courtyard. There were observation towers at the corners of the outer wall.

Guards

2. Most of the guards were Russian men, who wore blue militia uniforms with light-blue rims on their caps, in contrast to the militia seen on the streets of Riga, who wore caps with red rims and tops. Women guarded the female prisoners' bath, but male guards escorted the women to the baths.

Prisoners

3. The majority of the prisoners had been jailed for black marketing activities, some for theft, and others for passport violations; one woman had killed her baby. Most of the women were Latvians, but there were two Russian girls, about 16 or 17 years old, who had been imprisoned for stealing from a store where they worked.

Conditions

4. The prisoners arose at 6:00 a.m. and were taken to the washroom by a guard, where they were watched constantly and were forbidden to talk to one another. Once a

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day the prisoners were taken to the courtyard for a 20-minute walk. Several women prisoners were selected to clean the cell; the brooms were passed out by the guards when needed and were not kept in the cell. Except for the women who cleaned the cell, no one [] worked. []

[] Visitors were not allowed, but one could talk to a lawyer in a special room. Prisoners were not permitted to lie down until 10:00 p.m., at which time they were supposed to go to bed and talking was forbidden. 50X1-HUM

5. Prisoners wore their own clothing, except for underwear, and used their own blankets or overcoats for bedding. To prevent lice, prisoners took showers once a week, and at that time their clothing was heated and clean underwear provided. Soap was passed out for showers but was not sufficient for subsequent morning washings.
6. Food was brought by the guards and passed through a trap in the cell door. Breakfast consisted of 200 grams of bread, coffee, or sometimes tea (both resembling boiled water), and a teaspoon of sugar. Lunch was 200 grams of bread, three quarters of a liter of soup, and a tablespoon of porridge. Supper consisted of soup or porridge. Prisoners were allowed to eat food supplies sent by relatives or friends and kept the supplies in an unlocked wardrobe. Smoking was officially forbidden, but those who had cigarettes smoked. Prisoners were permitted to have matches and the striking surface of the match box, not the whole box.
7. It was possible to receive packages containing clothing, food, and cigarettes once a week. The packages were delivered to a guard in some office, where they were thoroughly checked. They were then taken to the cell and given to the recipient, who signed one copy of an itemized list of the contents of the package and received a second copy to keep. [] never heard of anything being missing from a package.

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Transient Prison at Riga

8. The transient prison (peresylka) at Riga was located across a railroad line from the main Riga prison, running to Yelgava. The prison consisted of two buildings and a third under construction and was enclosed by a barbed-wire fence. The building nearer the entrance was for men and the building in the rear for women. The cells were smaller than at Yelgava but held the same number of prisoners because there were double-decker beds. The building under construction was of concrete and was to be used as an arrest house. Observation posts were located at the corners of the fence.

Guards

9. Most of the guards were Latvians and those inside the buildings were regular militia. []

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Prisoners

10. Prisoners at the transient prison were waiting for their transportation to one of the other prisons in Riga or to Russia. There were many people who had been sentenced for five, ten, or more years. Two Latvian sisters from Sarkandaugava had received sentences of 25 years each, and a teacher's wife, also a Latvian, had been sentenced for seven years because some food products had been missing in the store where she was employed. A number of people had been sentenced for a year for passport offenses, including three or four Latvians from Riga and two gypsies. There were some thieves, most of whom were Russian. []

[] two German PWs; one had been sentenced to ten years for the theft of ten centners of sugar, although he had taken only a small amount and other prisoners had taken the rest in his behalf. The second PW had been sentenced for five years for a theft in an automobile repair shop where he had worked, although he stated he was completely innocent. One Latvian joiner and ex-soldier was sentenced to ten years for fighting against the USSR during World War II (under Sect. 58 of the Soviet Penal Code). A painter, also an ex-soldier, was sentenced for eight years. 50X1-HUM

Conditions

11. Conditions were about the same as in Yelgava, but in Riga it was possible to work on the new construction in the courtyard. The work was hard, however, because women

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as well as men had to split rocks and stir concrete. The food was better than in Yelgava. At breakfast the prisoners received 500 grams of bread which had to do for lunch and supper, tea or coffee, and a tablespoon of sugar. For lunch there was soup and porridge and for supper, green salad, soup, or porridge.

Provodnik Prison at Riga

General

12. A prison was located in the buildings of the former Provodnik Factory at Riga; during the war, it had served as a concentration camp. There were two large brick buildings, approximately the same size, encircled by barbed wire; the building to the left of the entrance was for men, and the one to the right for women. The women's building was five stories high, and on each floor there was a large room for about 100 persons, where the prisoners slept. New arrivals were quartered in one room. The rooms had central heating and also stoves for those times in the winter when the central heating was inadequate. There were some smaller buildings containing storage rooms, kitchen and mess-hall, canteen, barber's shop, and recreation hall with library (klub). The distance from the gates to the buildings was about 500 meters. Observation posts were located at the corners of the fences.

Guards

13. The guards inside the prison area were of the same type as those at Yelgava and the transient prison at Riga. The guards outside the gates were field troops. Their caps differed from those of the interior guards, but source does not know in what respect. According to people who had been at the prison longer than source, the exterior guards were Armenians. Three or four of these guards traveled with each prisoner work brigade to the place of work. Source's brigade was guarded by Armenian soldiers and a Latvian officer. There were guards at the gates and along the way from the gates to the buildings. Most of the guards inside the prison area were Russian and Latvian men, but there were some women, one with the rank of captain. The chief of the prison was a colonel, but he was seldom seen and probably had his office elsewhere. Besides the guards at the observation posts and at the gates, there were few guards inside the prison, except for the officer on duty who patrolled the premises day and night. The officer on duty also carried out the prisoners' rollcall at 5:00 p.m. each day and was present and responsible for order during recreation time.

Prisoners

14. There were usually about 1300 prisoners, although at one time there were 1328, approximately 500 women and 800 men. There were several Germans imprisoned for passport violations, three of whom had served part of their sentences in a prison on Dunties iela in Riga, which had been closed. There were many Latvians, some Russians, Poles, Jews, and one Estonian woman. The Estonian had been unemployed in Tallinn and had come to Riga looking for work, where she had been discovered without registration in Riga during a police roundup and sentenced to one year in jail. A Russian woman who had also come to Riga looking for work and better living conditions had met with a similar fate. One Jewish man who worked in the prison store said he was in jail only because he had been a rich man. Most of the people had received short sentences for passport violations, although some prisoners had received sentences of five, seven, and ten years. Once a month, a transport took some of the prisoners to Russia, usually those serving two-year sentences or longer. The only people serving long terms who stayed at the Riga prison were those whose professional skills were needed, including a Latvian woman doctor serving a five-year sentence and a Russian woman dentist.

Work Brigades

15. Each new prisoner was given a health check, then admitted to a common hall and enlisted in one of the work brigades. Each brigade consisted of 30 prisoners (sic; also reported as 20) and a leader chosen from among the prisoners. Kitchen workers, barbers, joiners, etc. were formed into brigades. Some of the brigades were sent to work outside the prison. Generally, brigades of women prisoners did work of the same kind as the men. At first, source's brigade worked on the prison grounds, splitting rocks and sorting stones and bricks for building purposes. Then the brigade was sent to a lumber mill, where the women had to transport lumber via small rail trucks from the place where the lumber was soaked in ammonium salt to the machines for processing. The lumber was used for assembling barracks. The workers wore rubber gloves and aprons for protection. Usually, only the chief of the brigade came in contact with the foreman, and the civilian workers avoided talking with the prisoners. Source's brigade also worked in a quarry in the area of Sarkandaugava. Male prisoners worked on hoisting cages, and

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the women split large rocks, sorted stone, gravel, and sand and put pieces of stone into a grinder. The material was loaded onto trucks and transported to some area where there was a road under construction.

16. Except for the chief doctor, a Russian woman, and the head nurse, the medical staff was composed of convicts, as in the other prison enterprises. The cooks and dishwashers were prisoners and so were those who worked in the cobbler's shop, the joinery, glazery, locksmith's shop, barber's shop, and in the accountant's office computing the prisoners' wages. One old Latvian woman of 72 who had been sentenced to seven years for stealing a bucket of apples and other old people who were not strong enough to work in the brigades carried coffee and tea from the kitchen to the dining room. There were about three or four such women for each room of 100 prisoners. Two or three women in each room were assigned to clean the rooms before breakfast, take care of the stoves, and gather wood.

General Conditions

17. The prisoners arose at 6:00 a.m. at the sound of a gong and ate breakfast in the mess-hall near the kitchen, the men at 7:00 a.m. and the women at 7:30 a.m. Shortly before 8:00 a.m., the bell rang for work and the brigades formed and walked to the gates where the head of each brigade checked the number of people in his group. Trucks driven by civilians were waiting outside the gates to transport the prisoners to their places of work. The trucks had benches either in rows facing ahead or along the sides of the loading space. The prisoners were not allowed to look around or talk to one another during the ride. Lunch was brought in large buckets. Those remaining on the prison grounds ate lunch in the mess, as did all prisoners on Sunday. The men ate at 12:00 noon and the women at 1:00 p.m. The brigades returned from work at 5:00 p.m. and at that time rollcall was held, all prisoners lining up by fives. By 6:00 p.m. all the prisoners except those working in the kitchen were free; the kitchen workers sometimes worked from 6:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. All prisoners were supposed to be in bed by 10:00 p.m., and the officer on duty made periodic checks during the night to see that all was in order.
18. Women prisoners wore clothing provided by the prison authorities, which included one set of underwear, a work dress, canvas shoes in the summer, and boots and stockings in the winter. A clean set of underwear was issued at the weekly bath and the old set left for washing in the prison laundry. Prisoners were allowed to keep the clothing when they were released. Each woman had a bed, mattress, two blankets, pillow, and one sheet. Laundry, shoe repair, barber's services, etc., were provided free. A piece of soap the size of a match box was provided for daily washing and a second piece with a towel for the weekly bath. The bathroom had several showers and two tubs made of tin sheets. 50X1-HUM
19. [redacted] Prisoners were only paid at the time of their release, [redacted] for food and clothing and a ticket Kaliningrad was deducted from [redacted] earnings, leaving [redacted] only two rubles. The earnings were figured out by the accountant's office on the basis of norms fulfilled. One woman, who had worked at lumbering previously, earned 80 or 90 rubles working at the lumber mill for the same period of time. [redacted] earned only 50 rubles. 50X1-HUM
20. The food was adequate [redacted] 50X1-HUM
[redacted] The food was better than in [redacted] 50X1-HUM
or the transient prison in Riga. There was often fresh meat and sometimes corned beef or noodles. The chief of the prison determined the day's menu, which he gave to the chef. In the kitchen there were five large kettles for cooking soup, three kettles for porridge, and two for boiling water.
21. Sanitary conditions in the kitchen were good. The two women dishwashers and the male cooks were checked by the doctor every week for cleanliness and disease and twice a month against VD. The kitchen workers received a normal bar of soap for a month and an additional small piece for each bath. The soap was yellow and of good quality. Each day at 11:30 a.m. the prison doctor and the medical staff made an inspection of the kitchen. All dishes were returned to the kitchen for washing, except for one spoon which the prisoners could keep on hand. The cooking and eating dishes were first rinsed in hot water to remove the grease, then washed in hot water with chlorine, and then in a third basin of hot water to rinse off the chlorine. The dishwashers wore gloves as protection against the chlorine. They had to carry the dishwater in buckets from the kettles. [redacted] never [redacted] 50X1-HUM
of any diseases in the prison [redacted] 50X1-HUM

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22. During their free time, prisoners were allowed to lie in the sun or on their beds, read, listen to broadcasts over loudspeakers, and visit the library where there were only Russian books. In the club room there were sometimes movies, concerts, or plays in which the prisoners acted. In 1949 there were dances every Sunday, but later they were stopped along with the plays, because the men and women misused these occasions. Visitors were permitted in the late afternoon on Thursdays in a special room. Guards were present, but there was no screen separating the prisoner from the visitor. The women were allowed to walk freely from their rooms to the courtyard but were forbidden to cross the courtyard in the direction of the men's building. Prisoners could receive parcels, even personally from the visitors, but they were thoroughly checked by the guards. Valuable items were kept in a storage room, one per floor. One woman was responsible for the room, kept the key to it, and slept there during the night.

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